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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1647
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 1174
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 6002
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000246

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2016
TAGS: [EPET](#) [PTER](#) [ENRG](#) [AG](#)
SUBJECT: GAS PIPELINE EXPLOSION IN AOMAR

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RICHARD W. ERDMAN
FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (U) Wednesday's edition of "Le Soir d'Algerie" reported that GSPC member Mohamed Keraouni, also known as Emir Kezouit, used a homemade bomb to destroy a portion of the Hassi R'mel-Cap Dijnet gas pipeline on February 6 in Aomar, approximately 100 kilometers southeast of Algiers. The article provided no indication of the source attributing the explosion to the GSPC. According to Le Soir, residents in the nearby village of Aomar initially believed that the explosion, which occurred shortly before 1 a.m. local on February 6, was an earthquake. The pipeline reportedly sealed itself automatically, extinguishing the fire within an hour. Should the GSPC prove to be responsible, this attack would mark the seventh of its kind in Algeria since 1995 but the first since 2000.

¶2. (C) Embassy contacts at the Ministry of Mines and Energy declined to issue an official statement but noted that security agents had started an investigation. Meanwhile, Algerian gas and electricity utility Sonelgaz issued a communiqué describing the incident as a "technical problem." A source at the Sonelgaz office in Bouira told a journalist contact of the Embassy that the explosion had been caused by a "terrorist act" and that the damage was "limited." The journalist contact further noted that following the explosion Sonelgaz cut off the flow of gas to areas supplied by the damaged pipeline. This included some hotels in Algiers, whose lack of hot water and heat were noted by various Embassy TDYers and hotel contacts. Post will continue to monitor the situation and report on developments as necessary.
ERDMAN